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Message Text

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53
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 SCCT-01 DHA-02 AID-05 CCO-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 SP-02 OC-05 OPR-02 PA-01 USSS-00

PRS-01 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01 SS-15 SY-05 SCS-03 FBO-02

NSAE-00 SAB-01 SAJ-01 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 NEAE-00

/110 W
---------- 096632
O P 021520Z OCT 75
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6497
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
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DIA WASHDC

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CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 12323

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN BEIRUT ROCKY BUT HOLDING TOGETHER

REF: BEIRUT 12245

1. SUMMARY: THE INCREASED FIGHTING RESULTING FROM SEPT 30 KILLING OF DRUZE OCCUPANTS OF A CAR HAS NOT ESCALATED AS MUCH AS MANY FEARED, AS CONSULTATIONS CONTINUE IN AN ATTEMPT TO CALM THIS ISSUE. THE "NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE" IS MEETING AGAIN TODAY AMID DECLARATIONS BY TWO PARTICIPANTS THAT THEY MAY WITHDRAW FROM IT. CALLS FOR FRANGIE'S RESIGNATION HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE PUBLICLY. END SUMMARY.

2. RENEWED FIGHTING SPARKEE BY THE SEPT 30 KILLING OF DRUZE RIDERS IN A CAR (REFTEL) DID NOT ESCALATE AS MUCH AS MANY FEARED DURING NIGHT OF OCT 1-2. CHIYAH AND AIN EL-RUMANEH IN EAST BEIRUT WERE THE SCENE OF CLASHES STARTING ABOUT 2300 HOURS (LOCAL),
BUT THE FIGHTING DID NOT SPREAD AND
ABATED CONSIDERABLY MORNING OCT 2. AS OF 1200 HOURS (LOCAL) OCT 2 SPORADIC INCIDENTS ARE OCCURRING IN THE CITY.

3. TRAFFIC IS A MIXED PICTURE. ABOUT HALF NORMAL MORNING OCT 2 IN THE HAMRA AREA OF WEST BEIRUT BUT CLOSE TO NOTHING IN THE CITY'S CENTER AND EASTERN SUBURBS. MANY PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO CIRCULATE BECAUSE OF YESTERDAY'S RASH OF KIDNAPPINGS, ALTHOUGH THE AUTHORITIES HAVE SUCCESSFULLY ARRANGED THE RELEASE OF PERHAPS TWO-THIRDS OF THOSE KIDNAPPED.
THE AIRPORT ROAD IS OPEN, AND THE AIRPORT FUNCTIONS MORE OR LESS AS USUAL. JET FUEL SUPPLIES HAVE REACHED ABOUT THREE-FOURTHS CAPACITY.

4. KIDNAPPINGS AND OTHER INCIDENTS CONTINUE TO DAMPEN
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ECONOMY ACTIVITY AND REPORTEDLY SOME SHOP OWNERS IN THE CENTRAL SHOPPING AREA ARE TRANSFERRING STOCKS TO SAFER AREAS. MONEY SHORTAGE IS ACUTE AS TODAY ONLY CENTRAL BANK AND ONE OR TWO COMMERCIAL BANKS ARE OPEN.
ALTHOUGH GASOLINE SUPPLIES SUFFICIENT TO PROVISION BEIRUT AREA FOR WEEK OR MORE, DISTRIBUTION REMAINS A PROBLEM BECAUSE TANKER TRUCK DIRIVERS STRIKING TODAY TO PROTEST KIDNAPPING OF FOUR OR FIVE DRIVERS YESTERDAY. PORT CONTINUES

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CLOSED. CABINET FORMED COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INDEMNIFICA-
TION FOR PROPERTY LOSSES AND ASKED THOSE WHO HAD CLAIMS TO
SUBMIT ESTIMATE OF LOSSES WITHIN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS. ONE
SUGGESTION TO BE CONSIDERED IS MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY WHICH
WOULD BORROW MONEY FROMRX NKS TO REBUILD THE DESTROYED
SOUKS (MARKET AREAS).

5. THE GOVERNOR OF BEIRUT ANNOUNCED LATE OCT 1 THAT THE
CURFEW IMPOSED ON PARTS OF THE CITY SINCE SEPT 19 WOULD BE
LIFTED, IN AN APPARENT CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MOVE. SECURITY
FORCES WILL CONTINUE TO PATROL THESE AREAS IN STRENGTH DURING
THE FORMER CURFEW HOURS.

6. DRUZE/LEFTIST LEADER KAMAL JUMBLATT DECLARED AFTERNOON
OCT 1 THAT THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLING OF THE DRUZE MUST
BE HANDED OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES IN 48 HOURS, OR ELSE HE
WILL LEAVE THE DRUZE PEOPLE "FREE TO ACT AS THEY WISH."
THIS IMPLICATION THAT HE IS RESTRAINING THE DRUZE IS BORNE
OUT BY SEVERAL OBSERVERS, WHO NOTE JUMBLATT HAS CONSISTENTLY
KEPT THE DRUZE OUT OF THE STRIFE SO FAR THIS YEAR. HOWEVER,
HE WILL PROBABLY REQUIRE AT LEAST SYMBOLIC REPARATION TO
SATISFY HIS FOLLOWING. CONSULTATIONS CONTINUE IN AN EFFORT
TO TAKE THE HEAT OUT OF THE ISSUE, CENTERING ON INTMIN CAMILLE
CHAMOUN. MEANWHILE, TENSION IS REPORTEDLY HIGH IN
BHAMDOUN, A MOUNTAIN CENTER ABOVE BEIRUT WHERE MANY
CHRISTIANS LIVE SURROUNDED BY DRUZE TOWNS.

7. DATT REPORTS CONTINUED SHOOTING IN THE ZGHORTA AREA
OF NORTH LEBANON, BUT ITS PRESENT DIMENSIONS ARE NOT
CLEAR. LOW-LEVEL FIGHTING HAS OCCURRED THERE FOR
SEVERAL DAYS RUNNING, AS THE ARMY SEEKS TO SEPARATE EF-
FECTIMELY THE ANTAGONISTS OF LAST MONTH'S TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA
STRIFE.
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8. ON THE POLITICKT FRONT, MOSLEM LEADER SAEB SALAAM AND
MARONITE MAVERICK RAYMOND EDDE DECLARED PUBLICLY YES-
TERDAY THAT THEY WERE RECONSIDERING THEIR PARTICIPATION IN
THE "NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE," QUESTIONING ITS USE-
FULNESS. COMBINED WITH JUMBLATT'S FURY AT GEMAYEL, THIS
POTENTIAL DEFECTION COULD SERIOUSLY UNDERMINE THE COMMITTEE.
HOWEVER, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT ALL THREE PARTICIPANTS SHOWED
UP FOR TODAY'S COMMITTEE SESSION, WHICH WAS ST LL UNDERWAY
AT LAST REPORT. WHETHER ANY OF THEM HAS "RESIGNEBJZ DURING
THE MEETING IS NOT YET KNOWN.

9. SALAAM AND EDDE SURFACED ANOTHER SIMMERING POL TICAL IS-
SUE YESTERDAY BY PUBLICLY CALLING FOR PRES FRANGIE TO RESIGN.
THREE LESSER-KNOWN DEPUTIES, ONE CHRISTIAN AND TWO MOSLEMS,

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MADE SIMILAR STATEMENTS. JUMBLATT JOINED THIS CHORUS BY STATING THAT "HIGHER AUTHORITIES" (READ FRANGIE) ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FAILURE TO SUPPRESS VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, THE PHALANGE PAPER "AL AMAL" SAID THAT FRANGIE'S RESIGNATION WOULD CREATE A SERIOUS "POWER VACUUM" AND WOULD NOT EASE THE PROBLEM.

10 COMMENT: PRESIDENT AL RESIGNATION AND OTHER DRASTIC "SOLUTIONS" TO THE CRISIS--THE MOUNT LEBANON PARTITION SCHEME, FOR EXAMPLE--ARE PROBABLY A SYMPTOM OF THE FRUSTRATION FELT IN POLITICAL CIRCLES AS MUCH AS AN ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS THE COUNTRY'S REAL PROBLEMS. THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE "NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMITTEE" MIGHT NOT HOLD TOGETHER HAS PROMPTED A THRASHING ABOUT FOR MORE DRAMATIC APPROACHES. FRANGIE'S DEMISE, OBVIOUS TO EVERYONE, IS A NATURAL CANDIDATE FOR SUCH ATTENTION. MOSLEMS HAVE AN INTEREST IN PROFITING BY THE PRESENT WEAKNESS OF THE PRESIDENCY; QUITE A FEW CHRISTIANS, FED UH WITH FRANGIE'S INEPTNESS, MAY BE WILLING TO GO ALONG SO AS TO SEE A NEW MARONITE PRESIDENT INSTALLED. (IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT EVEN PHALANGIST "AL AMAL" DID NOT DEFEND FRANGIE PER SE, BUT CONCENTRATED INSTEAD ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF A RESIGNATION.) HOWEMER, IT IS QUESTIONABLE THAT THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WOULD SUHPORT A FRANGIE RESIGNATION. CHRISTIAN LEBANON MIGHT SPLIT ON THE ISSUE, WITH SOME POSSIBLY RALLYING IN
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SURPRISING FASHION TO THE PRESIDENT'S SIDE.
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